

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ADP-00 NSC-10 NSCE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10

NSAE-00 RSC-01 PM-03 DODE-00 L-02 IO-03 DPW-01 AID-10

PRS-01 USIA-04 EUR-10 EB-03 AGR-03 OMB-01 TRSE-00

RSR-01 /091 W

----- 034845

R 081115Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5704

USDEL JEC PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAIGON 14343

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, MILI, VS

SUBJECT: MR 2 SITREP, AUGUST 6

FOLLOWING RECEIVED FROM AMCONSUL NHA TRANG BEING REPEATED

QUOTE

NHA TRANG 0747

LIMDIS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT MILI VS

SUBJECT: MR 2 SIT REP, AUGUST 6

1. SECURITY SITUATION: HOSTILITIES IN MR 2 CONTINUED OVER WEEKEND

AT ROUGHLY SAME LEVEL AS IN RECENT DAYS: 35 INCIDENTS REPORTED

OVER LAST 72-HOUR PERIOD. ABOUT HALF OF TOTAL

NUMBER OF INCIDENTS

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WERE LISTED AS ENEMY ATTACKS BY FIRE, WHILE REMAINDER CONSISTED

OF MIXED BAG OF FIRE-FIGHTS, MININGS, AND ENEMY GROUND ASSAULTS. TYPICALLY, ACTION WAS CONCENTRATED IN KONTUM AND IN THREE NORTHERN DISTRICTS OF BINH DINH; 14 INCIDENTS OCCURED IN KONTUM, SEVEN IN BINH DINH, FIVE IN PHU YEN, FIVE IN PLEIKU, THREE IN NINH THUAN, AND ONE IN BINH THUAN. ALTHOUGH NO APPRECIABLE CHANGE IN LOCUS OR NUMBER OF INCIDENTS WAS SEEN OVER PERIOD, NVA/VC SERIOUSNESS, AS REFLECTED BY THEIR WILLINGNESS TO TAKE HEAVY CASUALTIES, HAS INCREASED. CASUALTY AGGREGATES: NVA/VC 54 KIA, FOUR CAPTURED; RVNAF: 13 KIA, 65 WIA, AND SIX MIA. VNAF TACAIR STRIKES CONTINUED UNABATED OVER THE PERIOD IN KONTUM AND BINH DINH -- 62 MISSIONS WERE FLOWN IN KONTUM ALONE ON AUGUST 3.

2. NVA ENEMY ATTACKS ON RANGER UNITS SITUATED NEAR THE LY THAI LOITRANGER CAMP IN NORTHERN THANH AN DISTRICT, PLEIKU, ON AUGUST 4 AND 5 SUGGEST POSSIBLE COMMUNIST DESIGNS IN THAT AREA. THE ATTACKS RESULTED IN INTENSE FIGHTING, BUT RANGERS REPORTEDLY GAVE MORE THAN RECEIVED: ATTACKERS INCURRED 27 KIA OPPOSED TO ONLY TWO RANGER KIA AND THREE WIA. MR 2 COMMANDER, HOWEVER, TOLD ME ON AUGUST 6 THAT HE THINKS THIS ENEMY ACTION IN NORTHERN PLEIKU MAY BE IN RETALIATION FOR RVNAF COUNTEROFFENSIVE IN TRUNG NGHIA AREA OF KONTUM. PERHAPS IN ANTICIPATION OF SUCH AN ENEMY THRUST, RANGER UNITS BROUGHT INTO THEIR CAMP FROM THE SURROUNDING COUNTRYSIDE 232 FAMILIES (680 PEOPLE) ON AUGUST 5. WE SPECULATE THAT THESE FAMILIES WILL BE KEPT AT THE RANGER CAMP UNTIL ENEMY INTENTIONS IN THE AREA BECOME CLEAR.

3. FIGHTING DRAGS ON IN KONTUM: CONTINUING RVNAF ATTEMPTS TO RETAKE TRUNG NGHIA AND POLEI KRONG (WEST OF KONTUM CITY) SINCE NVA OCCUPIED THEM ON JUNE 8 HAVE BEEN UNSUCCESSFUL, AND THE ENGAGEMENT HAS BECOME THE LONGEST BATTLE IN MR 2 SINCE THE CEASE-FIRE WENT INTO EFFECT. DESPITE OCCASIONAL SHORTAGES OF ARTILLERY AMMUNITION AND POL, RVNAF FORCES (THE 44TH, 45TH AND 53RD REGIMENTS OF THE 23RD DIVISION; ONE BATTALION OF 47TH REGT, 22ND DIVISION; AND RANGER, RF/PF AND ARMORED UNITS) HAVE BEEN GENERALLY WELL SUPPLIED IN THESE CATEGORIES. A DAILY AVERAGE OF ABOUT 1,500 ROUNDS OF 175, 155 AND 105 MM HAVE BEEN FIRED AT THE ENEMY. RVNAF GAINS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN NEGLIGIBLE, AND COST HAS BEEN HIGH. DURING FOUR WEEKS ENDING JULY 29, THE 23RD DIVISION LOST 106 KILLED AND 396 WOUNDED, ALONG WITH SEVEN CONFIDENTIAL

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M-41 TANKS. VNAF LOST ONE A-37 AIRCRAFT. ENEMY FORCES MAKE FREQUENT SORTIES FROM THEIR WELL-BUNKERED POSITIONS, AND HAVE SO FAR BEEN ABLE TO RESIST RVNAF GROUND, ARTILLERY AND AIR ASSAULTS.

4. IN CONCENTRATED ATTEMPT TO BOMB ENEMY LOOSE, VNAF HAS STAGED UNUSUALLY LARGE NUMBERS OF AIR STRIKES OVER THE PAST WEEK. KONTUM POLOFF REPORTS SOME EVIDENCE THAT FRIENDLY REDEPLOYMENT

MAY TAKE PLACE UNDER THIS AIR COVER, AND HE EXPECTS RENEWED GROUND ASSAULTS TO FOLLOW SOON.

5. HIGHER AUTHORITIES APPEAR DISPLEASED WITH LACK OF PROGRESS. MR 2 COMMANDER MAJ. GEN. TOAN IS SAID TO HAVE PRODDED BRIG. GEN CAM, 23RD DIVISION COMMANDER, INTO MAKING REPEATED GROUND ASSAULTS. CAM HIMSELF INDICATED A LACK OF ENTHUSIASM FOR THE EFFORT WHEN HE TOLD THE CONSUL AT KONTUM IN EARLY JULY THAT HE DID NOT THINK THE RECAPTURE OF THE AREA WAS WORTH THE COST IN MILITARY COIN, BUT THAT SAIGON HAD MADE THE BATTLE A POLITICAL TEST OF WILL WHICH MUST BE WON (SEE NHA TRANG A-92). FOR THEIR PART, NONE OF THE SAIGON BRASS RESPONDED TO CAM'S INVITATION TO TAKE PART IN AUGUST 1 FESTIVITIES MARKING DIVISION'S 18TH ANNIVERSARY. NEVERTHELESS, NO LEADING OFFICERS OF THE 23RD HAVE BEEN REPLACED, DESPITE RUMORS THEY WOULD BE.

6. TROOPERS' MORALE, BUFFETED BY SIGNIFICANT CASUALTIES AND INFREQUENT ROTATION IN A SO-FAR UNSUCCESSFUL EFFORT, HAS FURTHER SUFFERED FROM LACK OF ADEQUATE RATIONS. AT LEAST ONE UNIT REPORTEDLY HAS GONE WITHOUT FOOD FOR A DAY OR TWO ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION. EVEN WHEN FOOD IS AVAILABLE, DAILY ALLOWANCE LEAVES ONLY 20 PIASTERS FOR FOOD OTHER THAN RICE. WE BELIEVE THAT IF HEAVY GROUND ACTION RESUMES AFTER THE CURRENT AIR CAMPAIGN THE RESERVOIR OF ARVN MORALE IS TOO LOW TO SUSTAIN CONTINUED ACTION FOR LONG UNLESS REMEDIAL STEPS ARE TAKEN.

7. ECONOMIC: NHA TRANG'S ECONOMY, DEPRESSED BY THE CUMULATIVE EFFECT OF LAST YEAR'S SPRING OFFENSIVE, WITHDRAWAL OF ALLIED TROOPS, AND RECENT IMPOSITION OF THE VAT, CONTINUES TO EXPERIENCE RAPID INFLATION. IN PAST WEEK, U.S. LONG-GRAIN RICE HAS CLIMBED FROM 15,000 TO 18,000 PIASTERS PER 100 KILOS AND THE PRICE OF OTHER VARIETIES HAVE RISEN SIMILARLY. PRICE OF GASOLINE APPEARS READY TO JUMP: PUMPS IN NHA TRANG ARE CLOSED TODAY AS VENDORS  
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REFUSE TO SELL PENDING OFFICIAL NOTIFICATION OF A PRICE HIKE. WE UNDERSTAND PER-LITER PRICES HAVE ALREADY RISEN IN SAIGON TO 150 PIASTERS FOR GAS, 85 PIASTERS FOR DIESEL FUEL AND 50 PIASTERS FOR KEROSENE. LOCAL VENDORS EXPECT THAT SUCH PRICES -- OR SLIGHTLY HIGHER ONES, ALLOWING FOR TRANSPORT -- WILL SOON PREVAIL IN NHA TRANG. TEARE UNQUOTE  
MARTIN

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